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On proving God's existence

132 In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, O God our Lord, we ask Your assistance, and prayers and greetings be upon our Master Muḥammad and his family.

Thus spoke the jurist, the learned and unique scholar Abū'l-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rushd, may God be pleased with him and bless him with His benevolence.

We praise God who has favored those whom He pleased (to favor) with His wisdom, leading them to understand His religion[1] and follow His path, and revealing to them, from His hidden knowledge the meaning of His revelation and the intent of the message of His Prophet to mankind, that which exposed to them the deviation of those who strayed from the path of His religion, as well as the distortion of the disbelievers among His Community. It was also exposed to them that there are interpretations that God and His Messenger [the Prophet Muḥammed], may God's complete blessings be upon him, the guardian of His revelation and the seal of His messengers, and upon his house and family, did not allow.

In a separate treatise,[2] we have already dealt with the harmony of philosophy and religion, indicating how religion commands the study of

1. The Arabic *Shari'a* can also be translated as *Law* or *Holy Law*.
2. That is *Faṣl al-Maqāl*, translated by George F. Hourani as *On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* (London: Messrs. Luzac & Co., 1961).

philosophy. We maintained there that religion consists of two parts:
133 external and interpreted, and that the external part is incumbent on the masses, whereas the interpreted is incumbent on the learned. With respect to that part, it is the duty of the masses to take it at its face value, without attempting to interpret it. As for the learned, it is not permissible to divulge their interpretations to the public, as Ali [Ibn Abi Tālib], God be pleased with him, said: "Address people in a language that they understand; do you want God and his Messenger to lie?"

Thus, I decided to inquire in this book into those external dogmas which religion intended the public to uphold, and to investigate in all this, to the degree to which my energy and capability permit, the intention of the lawgiver, God's prayer and peace be upon him. For on this issue, people in [this] religion have been greatly confused, to the point of splintering into many erring groups and different sects, each group believing that it is following the original religion and branding whoever disagrees with it as either a heretic or an unbeliever (*Kāfir*) whose blood and property are free for all. All this is a departure from the intent of the lawgiver, occasioned by their mistaken understanding of the intent of religion.

The most famous of these sects in our time are four: (1) The sect called the Ash'arite, which is believed by most people of our day to be the orthodox; (2) that which is called the Mu'tazilite; (3) the group which is known as the esoteric [Bāṭini]; and (4) the one called the literalist.

All these sects have entertained diverse beliefs about God and distorted the apparent meaning of many statements of Scripture with interpretations applied[3] to such beliefs, claiming that[4] these interpretations constitute the original religion that all people were meant to uphold, and that whoever deviates from them is either an unbeliever or a heretic. However, if [all such] beliefs were examined and compared with the intent of religion, it would appear that most of them are novel statements and heretical interpretations. Of these beliefs I will refer to those which have acquired the status of obligatory dogma in the Law without which the faith [of the Muslim] cannot be complete. In all this I will inquire into

3. Or *Tailored to fit.*
4. In manuscript number 129 (hereafter "A"): *Each one of them believes.*

134 the intent of the lawgiver, God's prayer and peace be upon him, excluding what was considered a fundamental principle in religion and one of its dogma, by unsound interpretation.

I begin by defining what the lawgiver intended the public to believe with respect to God Almighty,[5] and the methods that the Precious Book employs to instill belief in them. So let us start with the argument that leads to the existence of the Maker, since it is the first thing that the responsible believer should know. However, prior to this, we should mention the opinions of those famous sects regarding this matter.

We start with the sect that is called the literalist whose followers claim that the method of knowing the existence of God Almighty is by way of report not by reason. In other words, with respect to the belief in His existence, which men are required to assent to, it is sufficient for them to receive it from the lawgiver and accept it on faith, just as they receive from him the states of the hereafter and other matters in which there is no room for reason. It is apparent from the consideration of this wayward sect that it is incapable of understanding the intent of Scripture regarding the method that it laid down for leading everyone to the knowledge of the existence of God Almighty, and through which He summoned all men to believe in Him. For it is evident from more than one verse in the Book of God Almighty that He calls upon men to believe in the existence of the Originator, glory be to Him, through rational arguments detailed specifically therein, such as the saying of the Almighty: "O people, worship your Lord who has created you as well as those who came before you";[6] and as the other saying of the Almighty: "Is there any doubt about Allah, Maker of the heavens and the earth?"[7] in addition to many other verses in the same vein.

It is not open for someone to say: "If this were the duty incumbent
135 upon whoever believes in God; namely, that no man's faith will be

5. Ibn Rushd invariably uses the phrase "*blessed and exalted*". I find it easier for the modern ear to use instead "*God Almighty*".
6. Majid Fakhry (trans.), The Qur'an: *A Modern English Version* (Reading: Garnet Publishing, 1997), 2: 20.
7. Qur'an 14: 10. Arberry translates the verse: "Is there any doubt regarding God, the Originator of the heavens and the earth?" *The Koran Interpreted* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

acceptable unless he comes to know these arguments, then the Prophet, God's prayer and peace be upon him, would not have called anyone to Islam without first presenting him with these arguments", for all the Arabs accept the existence of the Glorious Originator. It is for this reason that the Almighty says: "If you ask them: 'Who has created the heavens and the earth?', they will reply, 'Allah'."[8] It should be admitted that it is not impossible that there may be some individuals whose intellect is so sluggish and their acumen so dull that they do not understand anything of the religious arguments which [the Prophet], prayer and peace be on him, has set up for the public. But this is the rarest exception. However, if there are such men, they would be required to believe in God by way of report. This, then, is the way of the literalists regarding the external meaning of religion.

The Ash'arites, however, maintain that believing in the existence of God Almighty is only possible through reason. However, in doing so, they adopted certain methods which are not the religious ones that God has drawn attention to and through which He called upon all men to believe in Him. Their most famous method is based on showing that the world is created in time, while the creation of the world, according to them, is based on the claim that bodies are composed of indivisible parts, that the part which cannot be subdivided is created in time and that bodies are created by its creation. However, the method whereby they showed how the indivisible part, which they call the indivisible substance,[9] is created in time is an abstruse one which many of the well-experienced in the art of logic cannot understand, let alone the public. Moreover, it remains a non-demonstrative method and does not lead to certainty about the existence of the Originator, the Almighty.

If we suppose that the world is created, it follows, as they say, that it must necessarily have a Maker[10] who created it. The existence of this Maker, however, raises a doubt that is not within the power of the art of
36 theology (*Kalam*) to dispel. We can neither say that this Maker is eternal or created. He is not created, because a created being would be in need of a

8. Qur'an 39: 38.
9. Or *atom.*
10. Or *Producer, (Fā'il).*

creator, and this one of another creator, and the matter would go on to infinity, which is absurd. Likewise [we cannot say] that He is eternal, because His action which is related to His products would be eternal, thus rendering the products themselves eternal. The existence of the created must be related to a created action unless [the adherents of this sect] admit that there can be a created action due to an eternal agent, since it is necessary that the product be related to the action of the producer, which they do not admit. It is one of their basic premises that that which is conjoined to the created is created. Moreover, if the agent were sometimes acting and sometimes not, there must exist a cause which makes it more liable to be in one state rather than the other. Then, a similar question can be raised regarding this cause, and the cause of this cause, and the matter would go on to infinity.

What the theologians (Mutakallimun) say in response to the claim that the created action was the product of an eternal will does not help them, nor does it dispel this doubt, because the will is different from the action related to the product. If the product were created, then the action related to its production must be created (irrespective of whether we assume that the will is eternal or created), and precede the action or be simultaneous with it. Whichever is the case, they are forced to allow one of three alternatives with respect to the eternal: either a created will and a created action, or a created action and an eternal will, or an eternal action and an eternal will. Now what is created cannot ensue upon an eternal action without an intermediary, assuming we agree with them that it can ensue upon an eternal will. Moreover, to suppose that the will is identical with the action related to the product is irrational. It is similar to supposing a product without a producer, for the action is something other than the agent, the product and the will, and the will is the pre-condition of the action, rather than the action itself. Furthermore, this eternal will must be related to the non-existence of the created object in an infinite time [since the created was
137 non-existent for an infinite time][11] for it cannot be related to what is willed at the time in which it necessitated its coming-to-be, except after a lapse of an infinite time, and what is infinite does not cease. Thus what is willed cannot

11. This phrase is deleted in manuscript "B".

become actual unless an infinite time has elapsed – a patent absurdity. This is exactly the proof that the Mutakallimun employed with respect to the creation of the rotations of the celestial [spheres].

Moreover, there must occur in the will, which precedes what is willed and is related to it at a specific time during which it must exist at the time of producing the willed object, a determination to produce that which did not exist prior to that time. If there were not in the willing agent, at the time of action, a state additional to the state it was in at the time the will necessitated no such action, then the occurrence of that action, at that time, would not be more likely than its non-occurrence. Add to this that there is in this reasoning digression and abstruse doubts that even the skilled adepts of the science of theology (*Kalam*) and philosophy, let alone the public, cannot resolve. Were the public, then, required to attain knowledge through these methods, it would be imposing on them what is beyond their capacities.

In addition the methods that these people employed in their discussion of the creation of the world have combined these two characteristics: namely, that they are not such that it is in the nature of the public to accept them, neither are they demonstrative. Accordingly such methods are suitable neither to the learned nor to the public. Thus we draw attention here to that to some extent by saying that the methods that they have followed are twofold. The first, which is the more famous and upon which most of their followers rely, is based on three premises which serve as first principles from which they hope to deduce the creation of the world. The first [premise] states that substances never exist apart from accidents (i.e., they are never divested of them); the second is that accidents are created; and the third is that what cannot exist apart from accidents is created; by which I mean that what cannot be divested of accidents is created.

As for the first premise, which states that substances do not exist apart
138 from accidents, if they mean by it the independent bodies that can be pointed to, then it is true. But if they mean by substance that part which is indivisible (since this is what they designate by the individual substance), then there is considerable doubt concerning it. The existence of an indivisible substance is not self-evident and there are with respect to it many conflicting opinions that are difficult to reconcile. It is not within

the power of the art of *Kalam* to disentangle the truth from them; such a job belongs more appropriately to the art of demonstration, and the adepts of this art are very few. Moreover, the arguments which the Ash'arites use in proving the existence of this [indivisible substance] are mostly rhetorical, for their famous argument in support of it states that it is one of the first points known about the elephant, for example, that we say it is larger than the ant, since it has many more parts than those of the ant. If this is so then the elephant is made up of these parts, and it is not one simple entity. Hence when the body is destroyed, it dissolves into them, and when it is constructed, it is constructed out of them.

They committed this error due to the similarity between discontinuous and continuous quantity. They thought that what applies to the former must apply to the latter. However, this is true of numbers only. We say that a number is greater than another by virtue of the many parts or units it has. But with regard to the continuous quantity this is not true. For this reason, we say of the continuous quantity that it is larger and bigger, but not that it is more or less, whereas in the case of numbers, we say that they are more or less, but not larger or smaller. On this view all things would be numbers and there would be no continuous magnitude to begin with; in which case geometry would be the same as arithmetic. It is self-evident, however, that each magnitude is divisible into two halves; by which I mean the three magnitudes which are the line, the plane, and the body [or solid]. Furthermore, it is the continuous magnitude that may
139 have in its middle an end where both extremities of the two parts meet; and this is not possible in the case of numbers.

However, we find this position contradicted by the fact that the body and all the parts of the continuous magnitude are susceptible of division; and whatever is divisible is divisible either into something divisible or something indivisible. If it is divisible into something indivisible, then we have found the part which cannot be divided any further; but if it is divided into something which is divisible, then the question recurs with respect to this divisible: "Is it divisible into something divisible or something indivisible?" If it is divisible *ad infinitum*, then there would be infinite parts in the finite thing. But it is elementary knowledge that the parts of what is finite are also finite.

One of the abstruse questions which must be addressed to them is this: "If the part which is indivisible were created, then what is the bearer of this creation (*Ḥudūth*)?" Creation is an accident among other accidents, and once the created object exists, creation ceases. For it is one of their principles that accidents do not exist apart from substances; therefore they are forced to concede that creation is from some existing entity and out of an existing entity.

They might also be asked, "If an existing thing can exist apart from not-being, then to what does the action of the agent attach?" for there is no intermediary between being and not-being, according to them. If this is the case, and the action of the agent does not attach, according to them, to not-being, nor to what already exists in reality, it must attach to an entity intermediate between being and not-being. This is what forced the Mu'tazilites to claim that there is in not-being an entity of some sort. They[12] are also forced to admit the existence in actuality of that which does not exist in actuality. In fact both sects[13] are forced to admit the existence of the void.

These problems, as you see, cannot be resolved by the art of dialectic.
140 Therefore this [view] must not be laid down as a principle for the knowledge of God Almighty, especially with reference to the public, for the method of knowing God Almighty, as we shall show shortly, is much clearer than this one.

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The second premise, which states that all accidents are created, is open to doubt; the obscurity of this claim is similar to that of bodies, for we have only seen some bodies created as we have accidents; there is no difference, between the two in passing[14] from the seen to the unseen.[15] Thus, if it is necessary in the case of accidents to apply our judgment of what is seen to what is unseen (i.e., to make a judgment about the creation of what we do

12. Ibn Rushd here resumes his discussion of the Ash'arites' position.
13. The Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites.
14. Ibn Rushd uses *al-Nuqla* to denote an inductive inference from the seen to the unseen.
15. Ibn Rushd uses the term "the seen" to refer to what falls within the scope of our sense-experience and the term "the unseen" to refer to what does not fall within that scope. Sometimes he uses "the seen" to refer to this world and "the unseen" to refer to the intelligible world.

not see by analogy with what we see), then we should be able to do so with respect to bodies, dispensing altogether with inferring from the creation of accidents the creation of bodies. For with regard to the heavenly body, whose analogy to the seen is itself subject to doubt, the doubt surrounding its accidents is similar to the doubt surrounding its creation itself, since neither its creation nor that of its accidents has been perceived. Therefore, we must investigate this matter by reference to its motion; and this is the method that leads those who seek the knowledge of God Almighty with certainty. Indeed, it is the method of the select and the one for which God has favored Abraham, peace be upon him, in His saying: "Thus We show Abraham the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth, that he might be of those possessed of certainty,"[16] since all the doubt has revolved around the heavenly bodies, and most of the theoreticians who studied them concluded that they are gods.

Moreover, time is one of the accidents although it is difficult to imagine its creation, because every being must be preceded by not-being in time. Accordingly, if the not-being of an entity precedes the thing itself, it cannot be imagined except with reference to time. Furthermore it is difficult to imagine the place the world occupies as created (assuming that every occupant must precede the place it occupies), for if the void exists, as maintained by those who believe that the void is identical with place,
141 then its creation must be preceded by another void, if it is supposed to be created. And if the place is taken to be the boundary of the body surrounding what is in place, as the holders of the second view maintain,[17] then it is necessary that this body should exist in place, and that this body would then be in need of another body, and the matter will go on to infinity.

All these are abstruse doubts. However, the arguments whereby [the Ash'arites] seek to refute the claim that the accidents are eternal are convincing for those who maintain the eternity of what is perceived as created; by which I mean those who claim that all accidents are not created. For they say: "If the accidents that appear to the senses as created were not created, then they would have to be either in transition from one

16. Qur'an 6: 75.
17. That is, Aristotle and his followers. See *Physics IV*, 217a–5.

place to another, or latent in the place where they appeared before appearing." Then they proceed to refute these two alternatives, thinking that they have demonstrated that all accidents are created. However, what simply follows from their statement is that those accidents which appear to be created are created, but not those that do not appear to be created, or those of which the creation of their accidents is in doubt, as in the case of the accidents pertaining to the heavenly bodies, such as their motions, their forms and so on. Thus, their arguments for the creation of all the accidents are reducible to the analogy between the seen and the unseen, (which is a rhetorical argument); except where the inference is reasonable in itself, and that is possible only after ascertaining the equivalence[18] of the natures of both the seen and the unseen.

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The third premise, which states that that which cannot exist without accidents must be created, is an ambiguous one, because it can be understood in two ways. The first meaning refers to that which cannot exist without the genus of accidents, though it might exist without a particular singular accident; the second refers to what does not exist without a specific accident *pointed to* directly, as when you say: "That which does not exist without this blackness I am *pointing to*". This second meaning is sound;
142 whatever cannot exist without an accident that one can point to and is created, its subject must necessarily be created too, for, if [the subject] were eternal, it would be devoid of that accident, but we have assumed it not to exist without it. This is an impossible absurdity. However, from the first interpretation, which they favor, it does not follow that the substratum is created; namely, that which is not free of the genus of accidents. For it is possible to imagine the same substratum, that is, the body, occupied successively by accidents which are infinite, whether opposed to each other or not. This is like speaking of infinite motions, as many of the ancients used to believe the universe is formed, one [world] after another.[19] For this reason, when the later Mutakallimun realized that this premise is tenuous,

18. *Istiwā* in this connection implies that the nature of the seen and that of the unseen are equivalent and the laws that apply to the one apply to the other.
19. As held by some Presocratics, such as Heraclitus and Empedocles.

they proceeded to tighten and strengthen it by showing that, as they contended, it is not possible for an infinite number of accidents to exist successively in one substratum. They claimed that there could not exist in that substratum, on this assumption, an accident to which one can point without this accident being preceded by an infinite number of accidents, which would lead to the impossibility of the existence of that which actually exists (namely that which one can point to), for it could not exist except after what is infinite has come to an end. However, since that which is infinite does not come to an end, it follows that that which is pointed to does not exist; I mean, that which is supposed to exist. For example, were the present motion of the heavenly body preceded by an infinite number of motions, the present motion of the heavenly body could not have happened. They have illustrated that by the case of one man saying to another: "I do not give you this *dinar*[20] until I have given you an infinite number of *dinars* before it." Thus it is not possible ever for that man to give him that *dinar* which is pointed to. However, this illustration is incorrect because it involves positing a beginning and an end, while positing what is between them as infinite. The utterance of that [man] actually took place in a
143 definite time, and his giving him the *dinar* took place in a definite time too. Therefore he laid as a condition that he will give him the *dinar* at a time between which and the time of his utterance, infinite periods of time had intervened, during which he is supposed to have given him an infinite number of *dinars*, which is absurd. The example shows that there is no analogy between it and the point it is supposed to illustrate.

As for their claim that that which comes to be after the coming to be of an infinite number of things cannot possibly exist; it is not true in all cases. For things in which some parts precede others are said to exist in two ways: either cyclically or rectilinearly. Those that take place in a cyclical fashion must be supposed to be infinite, unless they are impeded by some thing. For example, if there is a sunrise, there has been a sunset, and if there is a sunset, there has been a sunrise; and if there is a sunrise, there has been a sunrise. Similarly if there is a cloud, there was vapor rising from the ground; and if there is vapor rising from the ground, the ground

20. An ancient Roman silver coin, or *denarius*.

was wet; and if the ground was wet, then there was rain; and if there was rain, there was a cloud; and if there was a cloud, then there was a cloud. As for what takes place in a rectilinear fashion, as when one human being begets another human being who in turn begets another human being; if that takes place essentially, then it is not true that the matter could go on to infinity. For if the first of the causes did not exist, the last could not exist either. However, if the existence [of the first] was accidental, as when the human being comes to be in reality from an agent other than his father, who is his originator – the role of the father being the role of the instrument with respect to the artisan[21] – then it is not impossible, were that agent to act infinitely, for an infinite number of people to be produced by means of a variety of instruments. However, this is not the place to discuss all this. We mention it merely to show that, what those people imagined to be a proof, is not really one. It is not even one of the
144 arguments that are suitable for the public; by which I mean the simple demonstrations whereby God has required all His worshipers to believe in Him. Thus it will have become evident to you from this that this method is not technically demonstrable or religious.

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The second method was introduced by Abu al-Ma'āli[22] in his treatise known as *al-Niẓāmiah*. It is based on two premises. The first states that it is possible for the world, with everything in it, to be the opposite of what it actually is [for example, it is possible for it to be smaller or bigger than it is now],[23] or in a shape other than its present one, or to contain a number of bodies other than the actual one, or to be such that every movable object moves in the opposite direction to its present motion. It would, then, be possible, [for example] for a stone to move upwards, and for fire to move downwards, and for the eastern movement to be western, and the western to be eastern. The second premise states that what is possible is created, and has a creator; by which I mean, an agent who made it more the susceptible of one of the two possibilities, rather than the other.

21. Or *agent*.
22. That is Al-Juwayni (d.1086), Ash'arite teacher of Al-Ghazāli.
23. This part is missing in manuscript number 133 (hereafter "B").

As for the first premise, it is rhetorical and appears so at first sight. With respect to some parts of the world, the falsity of this premise is self-evident, as, for instance, in supposing man to exist in a different form than his present one. With respect to other parts, the matter is doubtful, such as [supposing] the eastern movement being western and the western being eastern, since this is not self-evident. It might have had a cause which is unknowable in itself, or it might be one of the causes which are hidden
145 from man's purview. It seems that what initially appears to the person who investigates these matters is similar to what appears to those who study the parts of manufactured objects without having the skills of their manufacturers. Such people have a preconceived notion that the constituents of these manufactured objects, or most of them, could be otherwise, [yet they continue] to generate the same actions for which they were manufactured; I mean, their purpose. If it were so, there would be no wisdom in what is manufactured. The manufacturer and those who share with him some knowledge of the science [of producing these things], would of course think that the matter is otherwise, and that there is nothing in what is manufactured save what is necessary; or if not necessary, that it exists so that the manufactured object may be more complete or better. Indeed this is the meaning of art. It seems that the creatures resemble what is manufactured in this sense. May the Great Creator be glorified!

In so far as this premise is rhetorical, there may be no harm in using it to convince all people; but in so far as it is false and nullifies the wisdom of the Artisan, it is not appropriate for them. It abolishes wisdom, because wisdom is nothing more than the knowledge of the causes of existing things, and if there are no necessary causes which necessitate the existence of these things, in the form in which those of their kind exist, then there is no knowledge here that distinguishes the Wise Creator from any other. Besides, if there are no necessary causes entering into the constitution of manufactured objects, there would be no crafts to begin with, nor would wisdom be attributed to the artisan rather than to the one who is not an artisan. Indeed, what wisdom would there be in man, if all his actions and deeds were to result from whichever organ happens to be, or even came to be without an organ, so that seeing could take place, for example, through

the ear just as easily as through the eye, and the smell through the eye exactly as it is through the nose? All this nullifies wisdom as well as the reason for which the Almighty called Himself Wise, may He be Exalted and His names be hallowed.

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146 It might be observed that Ibn Sina accepts this premise in a certain respect, since he believes that every existing entity, other than the Agent, if considered in itself, is possible and contingent. The contingent is of two types: one is contingent by virtue of its agent, and the other is necessary by virtue of its agent, though possible in itself, while what is necessary in every respect is the First Agent. However, this claim is patently absurd because what is possible in itself and its essence, cannot become necessary by virtue of its agent, unless the nature of what is possible becomes that of the necessary. If it is said that he means by saying "possible in itself" that which, when its agent is imagined to be removed, it is itself removed,[24] we would assert that this removal is impossible. This, however, is not the place to argue with this man; what led us to argue with him concerning the things he has invented forced us to mention him. Let us return to the matter at hand, then.

As for the second premise, which states that what is contingent[25] is created, this too is not self-evident. Indeed, the philosophers disagreed about it, Plato allowing a contingent thing to exist eternally, while Aristotle did not allow it. This is a very abstruse question. Its truth does not become evident except to the people of the art of demonstration, who are the scholars (*al-ʿUlamā*)[26] whom God [Almighty][27] has favored with His knowledge and supported their testimony with His own testimony and that of His angels in the Precious Book.

As for Abū al-Maʿāli, he sought to explain this premise by recourse to other premises, one of which is that the contingent must have a determinant (*Mukhassis*[28]) to make it the likely recipient of one rather

24. That is, it becomes non-existent.
25. Or *possible.*
26. Or *scientists.*
27. Deleted in "A" and "B".
28. *Mukhassis,* someone to determine or specify it.

than the other of two contingent attributes. The second [premise] is that
147 this determinant cannot be but a willing agent; and the third [premise] is that what exists as a result of will is created. He [Abū al-Ma'āli] then explained how the contingent derives from the will, that is, from a willing agent, by virtue of the fact that every action is either from nature or from will. However, nature does not cause one of two similar possibilities (meaning that it brings about one to the exclusion of its like), but rather both. For example, scammony[29] does not purge the bile that is on the right side of the body rather than that which is on the left side; whereas the will determines one thing rather than its like. [Abū al-Ma'āli,] then, added that the world is the same whether it is in the place where it is now, within the milieu in which it was created (meaning the void), or is in another place within that void. From this he inferred that the world is created by will.

The premise stating that the will is what determines the one rather than the other of two comparable instances is correct, but the one stating that the world is surrounded by a void is false; or at least, not self-evident. Moreover, [Abū al-Ma'āli's] positing of the void leads to a repugnant result, according to them; namely that the void is eternal, since if it was created it would require another void.

However, the premise stating that nothing issues from the will except a created object is not obvious, for the actual will exists along with the action which produces the willed object itself, since will is a relative concept. It has been shown that if one of two correlatives existed in actuality, the other would exist in actuality as well, such as the father and the son; but if one of them existed potentially, the other would have to exist in potentiality also. Should the will, which is in actuality, be created, then the willed object must necessarily be created [in actuality].[30] Furthermore, should the will, which is in actuality, be eternal, then the willed, which is in actuality, will be eternal. With regard to the will which precedes what is willed, it is a will in potentiality; by which I mean a will whose object has not come into being actually, since this will has not been conjoined to the action which
148 necessitates the emergence of the willed object. It is clear, then, that if its

29. *Convolvulus Scammonia* which is a twining plant whose dried sap is used for the purging of the bile.

30. Deleted in "B".

willed object came into being, the will is in a state different from what it was in before its willed object came into being actually, since it is the cause of the creation of the willed object through the mediation of the action. Thus, should the Mutakallimun posit that the will is created, it follows necessarily that the willed object is created also.

It seems that the Scripture (*al-Shar'*) does not go that far in explaining those things to the public. For this reason it does not refer explicitly to either an eternal or a created will; rather, it refers to what is more obvious; namely, that the will [brings forth existing beings][31] which are created, as in the saying of the Almighty: "Indeed, when We want a thing to be, We just say to it: "Be", and it comes to be."[32] That this is the case is due to the fact that the common people do not understand the meaning of existing things created by an eternal will; indeed, the truth is that Scripture has not stated explicitly whether the will is created or is eternal, since this is one of the ambiguous issues for the majority of people.[33] The Mutakallimun do not have a single conclusive proof to show the impossibility of the subsistence of a created will in an eternal being, because the principle to which they appeal in denying the subsistence of a created will in an eternal being is the premise whose weakness we have already exposed; namely, that that which cannot exist without created accidents is created. We will explain this point more fully in our discussion of the will.

From all this, it will have become evident to you, then, that the Ash'arites' famous methods, purporting to lead to the knowledge of God Almighty, are not theoretically certain [nor are they religiously certain].[34] This is obvious to whoever investigates the types of arguments to which the Precious Book draws attention regarding this matter (that is, the knowledge of the existence of the Artisan), by which I mean that, when the religious methods are investigated carefully, they are found to include, at most, two characteristics: certainty and simplicity rather than complexity, I mean, having few premises, whereby their conclusions are close to their first premises.

31. Deleted in "S".
32. Qur'an 16: 40.
33. The reference is to the Qur'an 3: 5, which distinguishes between ambiguous (*Mutashābihāt*) and unambiguous (*Muḥkamāt*) verses.
34. Deleted in "B".

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149 As regards the Sufis, their methods of investigation are not theoretical, composed of premises and syllogisms. Rather, they claim that the knowledge of God, as well as other entities, is something cast in the soul once it has been cleansed of its worldly appetites and upon focusing its attention on the desired object. In support of this view, they appeal to the external meaning of many religious texts, like the saying of the Almighty: "And fear Allah and He will teach you,"[35] and: "And those who strive in Our cause We shall guide in Our ways,"[36] and: "O you who believe, if you fear Allah, He will provide you with a criterion"[37] [to distinguish right from wrong], and many other texts like these believed to buttress this point.

However, we hold that, even if we admit the existence of this method, it is not common to all men, *qua* men. Indeed if they were intended to follow this method, the method of theoretical investigation would have been dispensed with altogether and its existence in the minds of men would have been in vain. Yet the Qur'an in its entirety is but a call to theoretical investigation and consideration and an admonition to resort to these theoretical methods. It is true, we do not deny that the mortification of the flesh might be a precondition of sound theoretical investigations, just as health might be, but the suppression of appetites is not what yields knowledge in itself, although it is still a precondition of it, just as health is a precondition of learning but is not what yields it. It is from this perspective that Scripture has called for this method and strongly urged its adoption in its entirety, (meaning in matters of action, not that it is sufficient in itself, as these people have imagined). If it is useful in theoretical matters, it will be in the manner we have just mentioned. And this is obvious to whoever is fair and considers the matter in itself.

* * *

With respect to the Mu'tazilites, none of their books have reached us in this island to be able to investigate the methods they followed in this

35. Qur'an 2: 282.
36. Qur'an 29: 69.
37. Qur'an 8: 29.

matter. It is likely that their methods are of the same type as those of the Ash'arites.

150 If it be asked, now that it has become evident that none of these methods is the religious method, through which religion has called upon all mankind, despite the differences in their natures, to confess the existence of the Almighty Creator, "What, then, is the religious method which the Precious Book has recommended and which was adopted by the Companions of the Prophet, may God be pleased with them?"

We would answer that the method[38] which the Precious Book recommends and calls all mankind to follow is found, if the Precious Book is reviewed, to consist of two kinds. The first is the method of providing for man, and creating all existing things for his sake. Let us call it the argument from providence. The second method [refers to] the manifest invention of the substances of existing beings, such as the invention of life in inanimate matter, as well as sense-perception and intellect. Let us call this the argument from invention.

The first method is founded on two principles; one of them is that all existing beings, which are found here below, are suited to man's existence, and the second principle is that this suitability is necessarily due to an Agent both intending and willing, since it is not possible for this suitability to be due to fortuitous chance. As for its being suited to man's existence, one becomes certain of it from the consideration of the suitability of night and day and the sun and the moon to man's existence. Add to that the suitability of the four seasons to him, and the place in which he exists, namely the earth. Moreover, it is evident that this suitability exists with respect to many animals, plants, inanimate objects and many particulars like the rain, the rivers and the seas; and, in short, the earth, water, fire, and air. Moreover, providence is evident in the human and animal organs,

151 I mean, their being suited to his life and existence. On the whole, then, the knowledge of the utility of existing things falls within this category. That is why it is incumbent on those who want to acquire a complete knowledge of God Almighty to inquire into the usefulness of all existing things.

38. In "A": *the methods.*

With respect to the argument from invention, it includes [the investigation of] the existence of the animal kind as a whole, and that of the plants and the heavens. This method is based on two principles existing potentially in human nature.

The first is that all these existing entities are invented, which, in the case of animals and plants, is self-evident, as the Almighty says: "Surely, those whom you call upon, besides Allah, will never create a fly, even if they band together. [And if a fly should rob them of something, they cannot retrieve it from it. How weak is the invoker and the invoked!]".[39] We see inanimate objects in which life then appears and so we know for certain that there is here a Producer of life and a Gracious Giver of it, who is God Almighty. As for the heavens, we know from their ceaseless motions that they are commanded to attend to whatever exists here below and to be subservient to us. Furthermore, the subservient and the commanded are necessarily invented by someone else.

The second principle is that for everything invented there is an inventor.

From these two principles it correctly follows that for every existing entity there is an agent who is its inventor. Evidence for this conclusion is found in the sheer number of invented entities. That is why it is incumbent on those who seek a true knowledge of God to know the essences of things, in order to understand the true meaning of invention in all existing entities. For whoever does not know the truth about the thing, does not know the real meaning of invention. To this the reference in the saying of the Almighty refers: "Have they not considered the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and all the things Allah has created, [and how perhaps their appointed term may have drawn near]?"[40] Moreover, whoever pursues carefully[41] the meaning of wisdom in the existence of every individual entity – by which I mean that the knowledge of the cause for the sake of which that existing entity was created and the final purpose intended for it – will have a more complete knowledge of the argument from providence.

39. Qur'an 22: 73.
40. Qur'an 7: 184.
41. In "S": *follows*.

152 These two arguments, then, are the arguments favored by religion. That the verses in which the Precious Book draws attention to the arguments leading to the existence of the Almighty Artisan are confined to these two kinds is evident to whoever studies the verses given in the Precious Book in this regard. Were these verses to be examined, they would be found to be of three types: (1) either verses referring to the argument from providence, or (2) verses referring to the argument from invention, or (3) verses combining both types of reasoning.

Of the verses that refer only to the argument from providence is the saying of the Almighty:

> Have We not made the earth as a couch for you?
> And the mountains as pegs?
> [And created you in pairs?
> And made your sleep a period of rest?
> And made the night as a garment?
> And made the day a source of livelihood?
> And built above you seven mighty [heavens]?
> And created a shining lamp?
> And brought down from the rain-clouds abundant water?
> To bring forth thereby grain and vegetation?]
> And luxuriant gardens?[42]

Or His saying: "Blessed is He who placed in the heaven constellations and placed in it a lamp and an illuminating moon."[43] And the saying of the Almighty:

> Let Man consider his nourishment.
> [We poured the water abundantly;
> Then, We split the earth wide open;
> Then caused the grain to grow therein;
> Together with vines green vegetation;
> And olives and palm trees;
> And gardens with dense trees,
> And fruits and grass,
> For your enjoyment and that of your cattle.]"[44]

42. Qur'an 78: 6–16. The verses in brackets are not cited, but are understood.
43. Qur'an 25: 61.
44. Qur'an 80: 24–33. See note 42 above.

The Qur'an is replete with similar verses.

As for the verses which refer only to the argument from invention, they include the saying of the Almighty: "So let man consider of what he was created. He was created from flowing water;"[45] and His saying: "Will they, then, not consider the camels, how they were created?"[46] or like His saying: "O people, an example has been given; so listen to it. Surely, those whom you call upon, besides Allah, will never create a fly, even if they band together."[47] In this vein also is the saying of the Almighty reporting the words of Abraham: "I turn my face towards Him who fashioned the heavens and the earth",[48] to which may be added innumerable verses.

Those verses which combine both references are also numerous, in fact they are the majority, like the saying of the Almighty: "O people, worship your Lord who has created you as well as those who came before you [so that you may guard against evil; Who has made the earth a couch for you, and the heavens a canopy, and Who sent down water from the sky, bringing forth by it a variety of fruits as a provision for you.] Therefore do not knowingly set up equals to Allah."[49] His saying "Who has created you as well as those who came before you" is a pointer to the argument of invention, and His saying "Who has made the earth a couch for you, and the heavens a canopy"[50] is a pointer to the argument from providence.
153 This is also true of the saying of the Almighty: "A sign unto them is the dead land, that We revived and brought out of it grain, from which they eat"[51] and His saying: "Those who [remember Allah standing, sitting or lying on their sides,][52] reflecting upon the creation of the heavens and the earth [saying]: 'Our Lord you did not create this in vain. Glory be to You! Save us from the torment of the Fire.'"[53] Most of the verses that bear this connotation contain both types of evidence.

45. Qur'an 86: 5.
46. Qur'an 88: 17. [And heaven, how it was raised up? And the mountains, how they were hoisted? And the earth, how it was leveled?]
47. Qur'an 22: 73.
48. Qur'an 6: 79.
49. Qur'an 2: 20–23.
50. *Ibid.*
51. Qur'an 36: 33.
52. Deleted in all manuscripts.
53. Qur'an 3: 191.

Thus, this method is the straight path by which God has called upon men to know His existence and has alerted them to it by what He implanted in their primitive natures of [capacities to] understand this meaning. The reference to this original primitive nature implanted in the natures of men is contained in the saying of the Almighty: "And [remember] when your Lord brought forth from the loins of the children of Adam their posterity [and made them testify against themselves. He said: 'Am I not your Lord?' They said: 'Yes, we testify.']"[54] That is why it might be required from whoever wants to obey God by believing in Him and listening to what His Messengers have brought forward to adopt this method, so as to become one of the learned scholars who testify to God's lordship, along with His own testimony and that of His angels, as the Almighty says: "Allah bears witness that there is no god but He, and so do the angels and men of learning. He upholds justice. There is no god but He, the Mighty and Wise One."[55] Evidence that existing entities point to Him in these two respects is the praise indicated in the saying of the Almighty: "And there is nothing which does not celebrate His praise; but you do not understand their praise."[56]

It has become clear from these arguments that the evidence for the existence of the Artisan is confined to these two types; namely, the argument from providence and the argument from invention. It has also become clear that these two methods correspond exactly to the method used by the select (meaning the learned), and that of the general public. Where the two types of knowledge differ is in the details; the general public are content, as far as knowing providence and invention is concerned, with what is known through primary knowledge, which is derived from sense-impressions. The learned, however, add to what is known of existing things through sense-perception that which is known through demonstration by reference to providence and invention. Some scholars have gone so far as to claim that the knowledge of the organs of human beings and animals they have achieved is close to thousands and thousands of times in utility. And if this is the case, then this method is the

54. Qur'an 7: 172.
55. Qur'an 3: 18.
56. Qur'an 17: 44.

religious and natural one, and the one that was brought forth by the Messengers and proclaimed by the sacred Scriptures. Not only are the learned superior to the general public when it comes to those two demonstrations in point of number, but also in point of the depth of their knowledge of specific objects. The general public theorize about the existing entities in the same manner as they theorize about the manufactured objects; about the art of making them they have no knowledge. All they know is that they are manufactured and that they have an existing maker. By contrast the learned are those who theorize about the manufactured objects on the basis of their knowledge of how such objects are made and the wisdom behind making them. There is no doubt that whoever possesses this kind of knowledge of manufactured objects knows the Artisan, *qua* Artisan, better than those who merely know that these objects are manufactured. As for the materialists,[57] those who deny the existence of the Almighty Artisan, their case is similar to those who merely sensed the existence of certain manufactured objects, but did not admit that they were manufactured. Instead they attributed what they saw in them of workmanship to chance and to whatever was the product of spontaneity.

57. *Al-Dahriyah.* In the Arabic sources, this term refers to an undetermined group of naturalists and materialists who denied the existence of God and believed in chance.